



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 12, 1999

Warm greetings to everyone gathered in Indianapolis for the fourth annual hate crimes conference, cosponsored by the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies. I thank Governor Frank O'Bannon for his leadership in encouraging the residents of Indiana to reach out across differences in ethnicity, race, and religion to celebrate our fundamental unity. The title of this year's conference, "From Hate to Healing: Diverse Communities Uniting," reflects your staunch commitment to overcoming the forces of division that still exist in America.

Throughout our nation's history, we have overcome extraordinary challenges by finding strength both in the diversity of our people and in the values we all share as Americans. The talents and contributions of men and women from so many different backgrounds have enriched our national life and helped us to achieve our goals. As the new century approaches, America once again has the opportunity to weave a strong fabric from diverse threads. We have the opportunity to build together the world's greatest multiracial, multicultural, multiethnic society; but we will succeed only if we are able to understand and appreciate one another.

This past year a number of tragedies have reminded us that we must remain vigilant in our efforts to prevent acts of hatred and violence that strike at the heart of the values that define us as a nation. Now is the time for us to take strong and decisive action to fight hate crimes, and I have urged the Congress to pass meaningful hate crimes legislation soon. Bigotry and intolerance have no place in our country or in our hearts, and I pledge to you that I will continue working to foster policies that reflect compassion and understanding. I know you stand with me in these efforts.

Best wishes to all for a productive convention and continued success.

*Bill Clinton*